




Holiday Cacti

Type	<p>Thanksgiving Cactus (<i>Schlumbergera truncata</i>) Also called <i>Zygocactus</i></p> 	<p>Christmas Cactus (<i>Schlumbergera bridgesii</i>) hybrid of <i>Schlumbergera truncata</i> and <i>Schlumbergera russelliana</i></p> 	<p>Easter Cactus (<i>Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri</i>)</p> 
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms November through January • Leaf segments are serrated or "toothed" • Pollen-bearing anthers are yellow • 2-inch long tubular flowers look like a flower within a flower • Flowers are mostly pastels, variations of red, pink, peach, purple, orange, or white 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms November to January; may continue blooming into March • Roundish leaves do not have spines; they are scalloped with minor serrations along the margins • Pollen-bearing anthers are pink to purplish • Flowers may be red, yellow, purple, pink or white • Not commonly available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms in Spring (March to May) • End of leaf segments have small bristles; leaves, are more three-dimensional with a thick ridge on one side • Flowers are more star-shaped than the Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti • Flowers are reddish-orange or could be a hybrid between <i>Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri</i> (reddish-orange flowers) and <i>Rhipsalidopsis rosea</i> (profuse orchid-colored flowers)
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water normally during flowering period (thorough watering when top inch of soil is dry to the touch) • Cut back on water after bloom period; keep on the dry side until flower buds form (occasional water to keep leaves from shriveling up) • Indirect light • 4 to 8 weeks before bloom, can encourage budding by placing plant in total, uninterrupted darkness for 12 to 14 hours each night or placing in a cool, 50° to 55° location 		
Fertilizing	<p>5-7-3 full strength or 10-10-10 or 20-20-20 half strength water soluble fertilizer (i.e. mixed with water) or granular organic fertilizer when plant is actively growing (after bloom and until Sept)</p>		

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Pruning	After bloom is finished (spring for Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus, summer for Easter cactus), snip off a 3 to 5 segment branch with sharp scissors or twist it off. Be sure to keep track of which end of the cutting is “up”
Propagating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set cut segment in a cool, dry location for several days to allow the cut end to form a callous (can lay on a paper towel) • To plant, dip end in rooting hormone (optional) and push the root end of the cutting ½ to 1 inch deep into vermiculite, or damp sand • Keep just barely moist, not wet • Place pot with cuttings in a spot that gets plenty of light but is out of direct sunlight • You should see new growth in three to four weeks; move plants to a fast draining potting mix • May not get blooms for a couple of years
Repotting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a lightweight, well-drained potting mix, e.g. commercial cactus mix, or 2/3 regular potting soil/mix and 1/3 sand • May only need to repot every few years • Repot after blooms have faded and before new buds appear • Repot in a container a little larger than previous container; plants bloom better when a little root-bound
Toxicity	Not toxic to dogs and cats, but fibrous plant material can cause irritation to the stomach and intestine, leading to vomiting or diarrhea